



APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF TRACEY B. WALKER
FEBRUARY 23, 2017

I would like to thank Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee for this opportunity to provide written testimony on the Governor's proposed budget. I am Tracey Walker, the CEO of Journey Found, an agency headquartered in Manchester and serving intellectually disabled people throughout north central and southeastern Connecticut.

I will focus on the budget as it relates to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) since the people we work for rely on supports provided through funding from these two agencies.

I am fully supportive and appreciative of the Governor's proposal to include funding of \$3.3 million in FY 18 and \$3.8 million in FY 19 that supports the work of the ID Partnership and begins to address the long unresolved waiting list issue. Current funding levels are inadequate to meet the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities leaving many of them and their families waiting for years for necessary services.

Additionally, I urge you to support the efforts to annualize the conversion of 40 community living arrangements from public to private providers as well as the closure of the Ella Grasso and Meriden Regional Centers and closure of Southbury Training School facilities. The private providers offer a cost effective and high quality alternative to care in public programs when adequately resourced and when transitioned utilizing a person centered approach. The CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance) believes that this conversion alone could save the state up to \$150 million per year.

However, neither of these initiatives addresses the needs of young adults with intellectual disabilities who are aging out of services received through the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and/or local school systems. While the Governor's budget includes funding for employment services and day programs for 93 people in FY 18 and 99 people in FY 19 there are 335 and 355 people respectively in need of those supports. These young adults can provide a meaningful contribution to their communities when given the resources to do so. Without adequate supports upon reaching adulthood, many have no other option but to sit at home.

The annualizing of the cuts made to providers in last year's "holdbacks" had a devastating impact on many programs and services. The Governor's proposed budget has a cut of \$6.7 million in each year of the next biennium. These were not legislatively approved by line item and I respectively request that the legislature not annualize them into the next budget cycle. This annualized cut would serve to undermine the progress proposed by increases in other areas of the DDS budget.

Finally, I ask that you carefully consider the full range of impact of cuts to services in the DMHAS line items. Many of the people we serve are dually diagnosed with an intellectual or developmental disability and a mental health disorder. Our people live in communities and utilize community resources just as you and I do. Cuts to the community services available to them will serve as a double loss for many of them. Being left with no employment or day services and no mental health services would be a recipe for tragedy. This is particularly true for the people currently on the DDS waiting list whose families are doing the best they can at home with whatever supports they can piece together.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. I may be reached at the numbers and email listed below if you would like further information.

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